

# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Illustrations by *Ted Wilbur*

*Gramps from Yesteryear...*



## A LOOPY FLYBY

A helicopter crew was performing a flyby of a ship. The ship's captain joked on the radio that the pilot could not fly a loop. After passing the ship, the helo entered a nose up attitude. Climbing to approximately 300 feet, with a right angle of bank greater than 90 degrees, the pilot then reversed and descended in a left angle of bank and nose-down attitude approaching 50 degrees. The aircraft struck the water slightly nose low with a slight left angle of bank. The pilot and sensor operator egressed underwater; the co-pilot was lost at sea.

Several factors surfaced during the post-mishap investigation. Photos taken of the flyby clearly indicated the pilot exceeded NATOPS pitch and roll limitations for the aircraft. There was no indication the aircraft did anything the pilot did not command, and there were no obvious contributing aeromedical factors for any of the crew members.

The sensor operator stated that the pilot had performed the maneuver on previous flights with the same crew with no objections from either crew member. In addition, several squadron members reported flying with or witnessing similar unbriefed, high-angle-of-bank maneuvers several times on flights prior to the mishap flight.



Grampaw Pettibone said:

Jumpin' jehosaphat, what was that pilot thinking?!? Gramps loves hard chargers and thinks aggressiveness is one of the basic traits that make naval aviators a breed apart. But gee whiz, kids, this was nothin' but plain old stupid. There is only one time where I'll nod at someone flyin' their machine beyond the limits that Momma Navy gives us, and that's when you are gonna hit something or something is gonna hit you. As this young'un proved,

## A Fifties Flightline



Naval Aviation News

once again, there otherwise ain't nothing good that comes from flying outside the envelope. This feller was feeling his oats and wanted to prove to that commanding officer on the radio that he was Sierra Hotel. The cost was beyond reason: one of our well-trained hard chargers, and an air machine to boot.

And what in tarnation was that ship's captain thinking? Challenging a pilot, on the radio for all to hear, to do something that he knows is wrong? Encouraging that kind of behavior don't make sense to Old Gramps. Commanding officers are supposed to look after their flocks and protect them like they were their own kids, because when you get to the heart of what command is really about, they are his kids! Shame on him.

This pilot was showing signs of what those geeks who study safety call "Failing Aviator Syndrome." Gramps ain't got no Ph.D., but I can tell you that someone—anyone—in that squadron should have spoken up about what this fella was doing. We don't teach naval officers to accept this kind of erratic behavior, so why didn't someone have the courage to speak up? You got to look after your buddies so one day they can look after you.

And finally, where in the world was this kid's squadron commanding officer? Teachers, moms, hoot owls, and commanding officers are always supposed to keep one eye open and know everything going on around them. He's got one of his gang who is straying farther and farther off the beaten path, and yet he either doesn't know or doesn't take action. Either way, it's unacceptable!

You kids know Gramps gets his dander up when we lose one of our finest, especially to something as gol-darned brainless as this. Let's at least learn a lesson from this one, shall we? C'mere kids, this is Gramp's wisdom distilled like a fine sippin' whiskey: *Don't fly your machine out of limits unless your life depends on it, and don't accept someone who puts you in a bad spot by flyin' crazy. Look out for your squadronmates, because outside of your family, they are the best family you got.*

Now you kids get back to work, Gramps is going to catch me some Rockfish for dinner.

*"I don't care what Grampaw Pettibone predicts, the one thing we can be sure of is that there can never be an UNMANNED airplane!"*

